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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/46/3, chap. IV, sect. D; A/46/38, A/46/77, A/46/325, A/46/344, A/46/377, A/46/439, A/46/462, A/46/491, A/46/501/Rev. 1)

1. Mrs. MBELLA NGOMBA (Cameroon), recalling what had been said by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, stressed the need to dedicate every possible effort in the 1990s to bridging the gap between North and South. To do so, it was vital to take into account the needs and aspirations of women through adequately financed programmes and policies that ensured their integration into the development process not only as beneficiaries but as agents. Though there was no lack of political will, concrete action, whether at the national or international level, was absent. According to the report The World's Women 1970-1990, despite some improvements over the past 20 years, the majority of women still lagged behind men in terms of power, wealth and opportunity. In that connection, certain traditional policies based on gender discrimination failed to take into account women's potential and undermined the great contribution made to development by women in the informal sector. Cameroon therefore supported general recommendation No. 16 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/46/38) that States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should give consideration to the position of unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprises, include information in their reports to the Committee on the legal and social situation of those women, and take the necessary steps to guarantee that they received payment, social security and social benefits. Her delegation was also in favour of the Committee's recommendation that States parties should incorporate the unremunerated domestic activities of women in their national accounts and in the gross national product. Measures to ensure equal opportunity for women living in particularly difficult conditions, such as disabled women, refugees and women migrants, and enable them to participate in all areas of social and cultural life were also important.

2. Her delegation fully supported the conclusions of the Secretary-General in his report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (A/46/439). It approved the choice of priority themes to be considered by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session, and took the view that the progress made by women in such areas should be considered and evaluated at the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and, more particularly, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995. Regarding the venue for that Conference, which would be decided by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session, in 1992, her delegation felt that the offer by China to act as host to it, and to the forum for non-governmental organizations to be held jointly with it, should receive special consideration, given that no world conference on women had yet been held in the Asian region. Her delegation particularly stressed the need for

(Mrs. Mbella Ngomba, Cameroon)

careful preparation of the Conference. It was a matter of concern that, of all the major conferences planned, the World Conference on Women seemed to have the least resources. The budget for the Conference should be re-examined.

3. Her delegation welcomed the efforts made by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women to take into account the needs and aspirations of women in the formal and informal sectors of the economy. In addition to its specialized research and training programmes, INSTRAW played an increasing role in disseminating information of interest to women. In cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Mediterranean Institute of Management, INSTRAW had organized a seminar in Cyprus on how to improve banking for rural women.

4. Her delegation found it encouraging that voluntary contributions to the Development Fund had risen by 34 per cent in one year, and that receipts were expected to total $10 million in 1991. It also approved the Fund's global programmes, in particular its support for women's access to food technology, credit and financing for micro-enterprises. It also welcomed the cooperation between the Fund and other United Nations bodies, and with the private sector and non-governmental organizations concerned with such matters as national machinery for women, women and the environment, and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of programmes in support of women and sustainable development, all of which were of special interest to developing countries.

5. Regarding the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, it should be noted that, contrary to the wish of the General Assembly, as at 31 December 1990 women still had not represented 30 per cent of the Professional staff of the Secretariat. According to the Secretary-General's report on the matter (A/46/377), although at entry level the number of women in the Professional category had risen, there were very few at the middle and senior management levels, and still fewer at the very highest level. There were only six women at the level of Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General in the entire United Nations system, compared with 168 men. Among the reasons put forward in explanation of the underrepresentation of women, the Secretary-General's report (A/46/377) mentioned the particularly low percentage of women from the African, Middle Eastern and Eastern European countries, and the elimination of posts on budgetary grounds which limited women's opportunities for promotion. In that connection, her delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal that, in those departments and offices with less than 35 per cent women overall, and in those with less than 25 per cent women at levels P-5 and above, vacancies overall and in the latter group should, when there were one or more female candidates whose qualifications met the requirements, be filled by one of those female candidates. At the national level, Governments must be encouraged to prepare lists of female candidates possessing the requisite qualifications for working in the United Nations.

(Mrs. Mbella Ngomba, Cameroon)

6. In conclusion, she stressed the important role played by the world-wide network of women's organizations, and the support they lent to the work of the United Nations. The planned Global Assembly on Women and the Environment, to be held in Miami in November 1991, the aim of which was to promote participation by women in environmental management and sustainable development, was a result of that collaboration.

7. Ms. GEORGE (Australia) congratulated the Secretariat on its energetic response to the General Assembly's repeated requests to provide more support to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. She was concerned, however, that the regular-budget resources allocated to the Division for the Advancement of Women would be insufficient to meet its priority activities, including servicing the Committee's meetings and preparing for the 1995 World Conference on Women. It was to be hoped that the Fifth Committee would act at the current session to ensure that the Division would receive the resources it needed.

8. At its 1991 session, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had made some useful suggestions to States parties on measures to reinforce their national machinery and accelerate the elimination of de jure and de facto discrimination. Although legal guarantees and anti-discrimination machinery were necessary, they were not in themselves sufficient. De facto inequality was not only the result of past legislation, but also the product of a range of social attitudes. In that context, as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women declared, temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality were necessary.

9. One practical problem faced by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was the growing number of reports before it. They were currently 25 in number, but the Committee could consider only 7 to 9 at each session. On a positive note, the situation reflected the steadily increasing number of States parties to the Convention and their willingness to report to the Committee. It was important, however, for the Committee to have the necessary means and sufficient time to discharge its duties. She expressed the hope that, as a result of the seminar organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women in the Cook Islands in 1991 - attended by 13 countries from the South Pacific - more South Pacific States would be encouraged to ratify the Convention. She urged all Member States which had not yet done so to ratify that important international instrument. Furthermore, some of the sweeping reservations made by Governments acceding to the Convention or other human rights instruments were contrary to the spirit of those treaties. Her delegation believed that the Governments in question should review their reservations periodically.

10. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (A/46/439) contained information on some of the activities undertaken by the Division for the Advancement of Women over the past year. Particularly

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noteworthy was the seminar on AIDS and its effect on the status of women and development, and the expert meeting on the situation of vulnerable women held in November 1990. The expert meeting had proved to be a valuable means of drawing attention to the major contribution of women referred to as vulnerable because they often bore family responsibilities single-handedly, and to the fact that, essentially, what they required was access to education and employment, technology and credit, and health care and welfare facilities. Governments had a vital role to play in that connection.

11. The special adviser to the Secretary-General had argued along similar lines in his consultations with Member States with a view to convening a world summit for social development. Her delegation agreed with the special adviser that social policy should be regarded not as a burden, but rather as an investment in the future peace and security of all countries and all members of society.

12. Social policy was also an important instrument for promoting peace at the most basic level - namely between men and women. Violence against women including intimidation and harassment, which were largely responsible for the inferior status of women in many societies - was detrimental not only to women themselves, but also to their children because of the scars such behaviour could leave on them. Her delegation welcomed the work accomplished in that area by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Her Government had, moreover, provided financial assistance to countries in other regions so that they could attend the expert meeting on violence against women, to be held in Vienna in November. Australia strongly encouraged Member States, non-governmental organizations and United Nations organizations to make the elimination of household violence a major theme of the International Year of the Family, scheduled for 1994.

13. Violence was also inflicted on women through traditional practices harmful to their health. Constructive initiatives had, none the less, been taken in that area; mention should be made, inter alia, of the 1990 general recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the final report of the Special Rapporteur of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/6 and that of the human rights seminar held in Burkina Faso (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/48). Governments must make every effort to combat such practices, in order to end the human suffering they caused and, at the same time, help women to achieve equal status. Such practices were incompatible with equal status.

14. In view of the importance currently attached to the environment, emphasis should be placed on the crucial link between the issues of women, development and environment. The key role of women in that area should be considered on a priority basis. Her delegation hoped that the Global Assembly on Women and the Environment - Partners in Life - would open the debate on ways and means of fully integrating women in the development process and involving them in

(Ms. George, Australia)

efforts to protect the environment. Her delegation intended to participate actively in that meeting. Her Government had established the necessary institutional mechanisms at the national level in order to ensure that women's contributions would be understood and properly factored into national policies to promote sustainable development.

15. Her delegation also looked forward to the report of the expert meeting on development, to be held in Vienna in December 1991. The Division for the Advancement of Women had already made an impressive contribution to the debates on the question in its report to the Second Committee on the effective mobilization and integration of women in development. The report, which once again illustrated the active role of women in all aspects of development, encouraged policy makers and academics to attempt to factor women's actual contribution to economic development into national accounts and establish statistics in that field. In addition to the work of INSTRAW in that area, and the general recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women requesting States parties to the Convention to accord greater recognition to the value of women's unpaid work, the report entitled The World's Women 1970-1990 would help to give a truer picture of women's role in economic and social progress. In that connection, her Government supported the approach taken to unpaid household work in the review of the United Nations system of national accounts. In 1992, her Government would be conducting a time-use survey, based on which a national estimate of the value of unpaid household work would be compiled. The initiative would serve as a graphic illustration of the double load of work - both paid and unpaid - carried by women, and would incorporate unpaid household work in the national accounting framework. The UNDP Human Development Report also made an important analytical and methodological contribution to the debate on equality as a factor in development.

16. Her delegation believed that there was an urgent need to improve the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat. It was confident that once candidates were selected for high-level appointments solely on the basis of qualifications, the number of women in the upper echelons of the Organization would be much greater.

17. In conclusion, in view of the importance Australia attached by to the work of the United Nations in the advancement of women, it would be a candidate in the forthcoming elections to the Commission on the Status of Women.

18. Mrs. BASNYAT (Nepal) said that the economic decline experienced by many developing countries in the 1980s had had particularly adverse effects on the status of women. They had even more difficulty in becoming fully integrated in the development process because investments lagged far behind in such areas as education, health and food which were of prime importance to them. Unless measures were taken to rectify the situation, the objectives set forth in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies might be very difficult to attain.

(Mrs. Basnyat, Nepal)

19. At the international level, her delegation welcomed the fact that some 109 countries, including Nepal, had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It attached great importance to the various mechanisms initiated by the international community in order to ensure the advancement of women. Similarly, at the regional level, the countries of South Asia had worked together in order to implement strategies in that area.

20. According to the 1981 census, women in Nepal represented 48.8 per cent of the total population and more than 30 per cent of the labour force. Moreover, 94 per cent of women lived in rural areas. Their work output was 50 per cent higher than that of men. Their literacy rate was only 18 per cent. Those statistics showed how great an effort would be required in order to help Nepalese women to achieve progress.

21. Her Government had made commitments in that regard. In the political sphere, Nepal's Constitution provided that at least 5 per cent of the candidates for the House of Representatives must be women and that at least three seats must be reserved for them in the National Assembly. Women's units had been established in various ministries; their activities were coordinated by the Women's Development Division of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. The Division gave particular attention to the creation of self-employment opportunities for rural women and the granting of credits to such women; both activities received UNICEF support. The seventh five-year plan, launched by the Government in 1985, placed great emphasis on the overall integration of women in national development.

22. She commended the role of non-governmental organizations in the advancement of women in Nepal. In particular, she mentioned the Nepal Women's Organization, established in the 1960s, whose primary objective was to enhance the status of women by raising political consciousness and implementing literacy, training, legal aid and family planning programmes.

23. Despite those efforts, the situation of Nepalese women was still bleak. In fact, two thirds of the world's women were deprived of their rightful status, were illiterate and lived in poverty. To redress that situation, it was essential to ensure the strict implementation of the Nairobi Strategies. Her delegation therefore welcomed the decision to hold a world conference in 1995 to evaluate the implementation of the Strategies and to take practical measures to improve the situation of women up to the end of the century.

24. Her delegation was pleased at the action taken by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which had provided Nepal with welcome assistance. The Fund's decision to extend its activities to two new areas - women and the environment, and assistance to refugee women - was very timely. She also wished to acknowedge both the role played by INSTRAW and the contribution made by other specialized agencies and bodies to the enhancement of the role of women in development. She asked the agencies concerned to

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continue their cooperation with Nepal in that area. Lastly, she emphasized the heavy responsibilities of the Commission on the Status of Women as the preparatory body for the 1995 World Conference on Women. She hoped that the recent global changes would eventually remove the barriers to the advancement of women in the developing world.

25. Mrs. VALLE ANTE (Cuba) said that although it was encouraging to note the number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the fact that those countries had adopted legislative measures to eliminate inequality of men and women, many women were still victims of discrimination. She welcomed the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women to deal with the subject of female migrant workers, who were exposed to special forms of discrimination, and to study the issue of refugee and displaced women and children.

26. For the status of women to show real improvement, it was essential to establish a just and equitable international order which allowed all countries to develop in a harmonious and balanced manner and ensured women freedom from discrimination.

27. Her delegation wished to reaffirm its support for holding a world conference on women in 1995 and to express its appreciation for China's offer to host such a conference. It believed that the Conference should provide an opportunity not only to evaluate the results obtained to date in the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies but also, in particular, to take specific measures to help the millions of women who were still deprived of the most basic social benefits.

28. She suggested that UNIFEM should make its objectives more widely known so that more countries could benefit from its assistance in projects for the advancement of women.

29. In Cuba, the revolutionary process had given women the chance to realize their full potential. For the first time in the country's history, they were not only beneficiaries of social change but also agents of social transformation. The Cuban Government was committed to continuous improvement of its policies for women, taking their particular needs into consideration. Women were playing a leading role in Cuba's development. They represented 20 per cent of the labour force, more than 80 per cent of public employees, 50 per cent of workers in the service sector and almost 30 per cent of managerial staff. The educational system allowed them to obtain degrees in a wide variety of disciplines. Cuban women had also played a very important part in defending the revolution's achievements, which were threatened by the aggressive policy of a great Power. Lastly, as a result of the emphasis on education and the establishment of child care centres, 95 per cent of Cuban women currently had stable employment. They therefore welcomed the positive changes in their status which the revolutionary process had made possible and which were the envy of women in other countries.

30. Mr. O'BRIEN (New Zealand), speaking on behalf of Australia and Canada as well as his own country said that he wished to comment on the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat, which was the subject of the Secretary-General's report in document A/46/377 and a matter of great concern.

31. In 1974, the year before International Women's Year, women had constituted only 16 per cent of the Professional staff. In 1985, at the time of the third World Conference on Women, at the end of the United Nations Decade for Women, the figure had been 23 per cent. To correct the situation, the General Assembly had adopted a five-year plan of action. While the plan had had some measure of success, the target of 30 per cent for women's representation by the end of 1990 had not been met. The General Assembly had now set a new target of 35 per cent by 1995. Australia, Canada and New Zealand were most concerned that in the middle of 1991 the figure was still under 30 per cent.

32. Although the progress made at the lowest grades - where the target of 35 per cent had been achieved - was gratifying, progress had been exceedingly slow at the D-1 level and above and was a long way off the 25 per cent target for 1995. It was unacceptable that only 7.8 per cent of posts at the D-1 level and above were held by women. Although the number of women at the D-2 level had increased from 5 to 10 between 1987 and 1990, the number at the D-1 level had declined from 28 to 17 in the same period. Of the 45 most senior posts in the Secretariat, only two were held by women. That situation ran counter to a number of principles. Firstly, the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat was essential in an organization which stood for social justice and equality; the United Nations must practice what the Charter preached. Secondly, the Charter stipulated that the United Nations must secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in its staff. Australia, Canada and New Zealand fully supported that concept. With their current low participation rates in the Secretariat, women could not realize their full potential. The equal participation of women in the Secretariat was vital to the Organization's efficiency. Thirdly, women comprised half the global population. Around the world the United Nations was actively involved through various programmes in the achievement of peace, security and development. If women were not among the decision makers, both the needs of women and their potential to contribute was undervalued and tended to be ignored. For the sake of the effectiveness of the various United Nations programmes, women must be in the "mainstream" at Headquarters.

33. Australia, Canada and New Zealand were appreciative of the efforts of the team of United Nations staff working to improve the status of women in the Secretariat, particularly Ms. Suzan Habachy (Coordinator, Office of Human Resources Management) and her team, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, who had organized meetings with the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups, and the Secretary-General, who have approved the recommendation of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women concerning the promotion, assignment and recruitment of women.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

34. Consistent with the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, which in paragraph 79 called for the appointment of women to decision-making posts in the United Nations system, Australia, Canada and New Zealand strongly believed that special temporary measures were essential to redress past inequities. The Secretariat must utilize the talents and skills of women and overcome discriminatory attitudes and practices. The new Secretary-General, whoever she or he was, must make that a first priority.

35. Australia, Canada and New Zealand also urged Member States to put forward more women candidates for the posts to be filled, as Ms. Habachy herself had recommended.

36. In addition to new appointments, promotions and internal movements could help broaden the representation of women in the Secretariat. The Secretary-General had a responsibility to ensure that those objectives were pursued. Australia, Canada and New Zealand remained surprised and concerned by the lack of progress in that field. That lack of progress suggested that there might be barriers in addition to those already being addressed by the Office of Human Resources Management. It was for that reason that General Assembly resolutions 45/125 and 45/239 C had called for a comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the obstacles to the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, which would form the basis of the next five-year action programme.

37. The Canadian Government had provided a consultant to assist in launching that study. Australia, Canada and New Zealand looked forward to the interim report that she would submit to the Commission on the Status of Women early in 1992 and to her final report to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. Her insights should form the basis of the preliminary draft of the next five-year action programme, which should be submitted to the Commission at its next session and the final version of which would be adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

38. The new Secretary-General, whether a man or a woman, must be committed to the task of guaranteeing speedy and effective action to correct the gender imbalance in the Secretariat, which was an indignity to the Organization.

39. Mrs. KANOUN (Tunisia) said that soon after gaining independence her country had embodied the principle of the equality of men and women in Tunisian law. It had also made equality of men and women one of its objectives in developing the Tunisian educational system. Substantial gains for women had likewise been made in the areas of social services, health and family planning. As a result, Tunisian women had become more integrated in the economic process, had gained a greater awareness of their rights and duties, and had been encouraged to act as full citizens.

40. The democratization process launched by the Government of the 7th of November, in particular by the adoption of laws concerning political parties, freedom of association and freedom of the press, had benefited all members of

(Mrs. Kanoun, Tunisia)

society including, as a matter of course, women. Convinced that there could be no democracy without the active participation of women, her country had set up a commission on women and development, which was responsible for determining in the light of social and economic requirements what action was to be taken, and for highlighting the needs of women as essential partners in development.

41. Her Government had ratified all the international conventions relating to women's rights. It was endeavouring to implement the General Assembly resolutions concerning the establishment of national mechanisms to consider women's issues within the framework of preparations for the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, which her country would like to host, and the 1995 World Conference on Women. To that end, it had established a centre for research, documentation and information on women, whose main task was to develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation for the benefit of women.

42. Tunisia had just made education compulsory for children of 6 to 16 years of age, a measure which would benefit women above all since they had the highest rate of illiteracy, particularly in rural areas. For that reason, special programmes to combat illiteracy had been set up. Moreover, special vocational training courses had been designed for women and special loans were available for projects undertaken by female entrepreneurs.

43. Her Government was struggling against poverty, of which women were the first victims. Women were also particularly vulnerable to the effects of the economic recession engendered by the debt burden of the developing countries and to movements such as religious fundamentalism. Such movements, which were dangerously antidemocratic, undermined global stability and constituted a serious threat to human rights, and above all to the advancement and dignity of women. The international community must condemn such discriminatory retrogade movements - which asserted themselves only through violence - and must reaffirm its unconditional support for women's rights.

44. Mr. ARROSPIDE (Peru) said that the new climate of détente which had taken hold throughout the world should facilitate consideration of the major global issues. Among those issues, the advancement of women merited priority attention; specifically, that meant providing adequate financial resources. In that connection, his delegation had noted with satisfaction the measures taken to ensure adequate support for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and to permit the full implementation of the programme for the advancement of women contained in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

45. As of 1 August 1991, 108 States had become party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. That was due in large part to the many activities undertaken to raise public awareness of the Convention. His delegation had also noted some progress with respect to the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat. It had taken particular

(Mr. Arrospide, Peru)

note of the meeting, held in May 1991, between the Assistant Secretary-General for Human REsources Management and the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups.

46. His delegation had studied with particular interest the report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the activities of UNIFEM. It greatly appreciated UNDP efforts to support directly projects concerning women and to promote in a general manner women's participation in decisions concerning development. The participation of women was precisely the goal being pursued at the regional level by the Participatory Action Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean (PAPLAC) and by his own country through a project entitled "Other food-processing techniques in rural areas", which stressed the capacity of Peruvian women to contribute to the country's development.

47. His delegation attached fundamental importance to the priority issues on the agenda of the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It was time to eliminate de jure and de facto discrimination against women once and for all; it was time to ensure that women were fully integrated into environmental and development activities and that they participated in decision-making on peace issues.

48. The economic crisis and the concomitant structural adjustment programme had led Peru to impose budgetary restrictions, which had hit the low-income sectors of the population particularly hard. The women of Peru had reacted to that situation with a courage and capacity for organization that demanded respect. Indeed, they had played a key role in the establishment of the 8,200 "glass of milk" committees and the 2,000 people's restaurants which had provided thousands of Peruvian children with their daily quota of proteins and vitamins. The Peruvian Government supported such new forms of mass participation, which were a reflection of a new society that was more community-minded and more just.

49. The women of Peru were conscious of the importance of their role in the production and management of resources and had established the national network of women's organizations and launched a programme for the advancement of women, whose objectives included the reduction of maternal mortality, the education of women and the elimination of illiteracy among them, access to family-planning facilities, the provision of sanitary installations in dwellings, and access by women to remunerated employment on equitable bases.

50. In conclusion, his delegation expressed the hope that the decisions taken during the current session would provide fresh impetus to the advancement of women.

51. Mr. AN MYONG HUN (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) recalled that, since its accession to independence in 1945, his country had always attached great importance to the issue of the advancement of women, which it viewed in a political light. The law on the equality of men and women, which guaranteed

(Mr. An Myong Hun, Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

them equal participation in political and social life, had been enacted in 1946. Women currently accounted for 20.1 per cent of the deputies in the Supreme People's Assembly.

52. In a world that was becoming increasingly interdependent, the international environment exerted a very strong influence on the situation of women. It was therefore imperative to eliminate the old international economic order and social injustice. The accumulating debt of the developing countries, the reverse flow of financial resources, politically conditioned economic hindrances, and racism were the main stumbling blocks to the advancement of women, and were problems that should be urgently tackled by the United Nations. The preparatory period for the World Conference on Women in 1995 should be viewed by Member States as an opportunity to intensify efforts to bring about the de facto political and social integration of women at all levels.

53. Mrs. KOWALSKA (Ukraine) said that 10 years away from the objective set by the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the results of the activities designed to achieve equality for women hardly gave cause for optimism. A third of the countries had not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, while the States parties to the Convention, to varying degrees, persisted in de facto discrimination against women.

54. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-fifth session, had decided that the World Conference on Women to be held in 1995 should be known as the "Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace", in order to indicate clearly that those themes remained priorities.

55. With regard to the current status of women and their rights in Ukraine, the socio-political upheavals accompanying the adoption of the Declaration on the Sovereignty of the State and the Proclamation of Independence had opened up new horizons for women while, at the same time, exposing them to risks.

56. A State based on the rule of law and on the principles of democracy and autonomy was being forged at an accelerating pace. The conditions therefore seemed conducive to a solution of the question of the status of women. Women played an increasingly important role in political and social activities, particularly those aimed at reviving the national language and culture and the historical traditions of the Ukrainian people. In that way, women were participants in the movement for the democratization of society and the protection of the environment. Special mention should be made of the activities of the Committee of Mothers of Soldiers aimed at reforming the military service and obtaining the liberation from Afghanistan of Ukrainian prisoners who had become hostages to political intrigues. Such action would have been unthinkable up until quite recently.

(Mrs. Kowalska, Ukraine)

57. It must also be noted, however, that a shadow had been cast over the rebirth of spiritual life and the resumption of political activity by social tensions resulting from the economic crisis, the imbalances in the market, price increases and the lowering of living standards.

58. Attempts were being made to resolve those problems by enacting legislation to protect the population, particularly women, against the threat of unemployment. The regulation of the employment of women during the transition period towards a market economy was under study. The Supreme Soviet of Ukraine was considering a long-term national programme to improve the status of women, which drew its inspiration from international instruments for the defence of the rights of women as well as from the conclusions and recommendations of the most recent sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and from other international meetings.

59. Her delegation was of the view that activities by the international community to achieve equality for women should be viewed in the context of the structural modifications under way in the United Nations and the accompanying change in priorities. In order to ensure the maximum effectiveness of such activities, the rights of women should be universally recognized as a humanitarian and multifaceted issue. The different aspects of the rights and role of women in contemporary society would be examined at the major international events such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and the International Year of the Family (1994). In that connection, it was necessary to place the issue of the rights of women on the agenda of the World Conference on Human Rights, since, as the delegation of Morocco had observed, the rights of women should be examined in that context. The time was past when a simplistic approach could be adopted to problems related to the status of women, which had previously been viewed through the distorting prism of economic and social development that reduced their significance and isolated them from national and humanitarian problems. If it were accepted that the rights of women were inseparable from human rights in general, then it would be logical to expect closer working relations between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights.

60. In her delegation's view, the Commission on the Status of Women had not paid equal attention to the three priority themes proclaimed in the Forward-looking Strategies, namely, equality, development and peace. As a result of the failure to consider political issues owing to political confrontations, the theme of peace had been neglected in comparison with the other two priority themes.

61. It was no longer possible, however, to ignore topical issues such as the role of women in strengthening peace and security, settling regional conflicts and in guaranteeing the rights of national minorities. Indeed, it would be impossible to strengthen the participation of women in political and social

(Mrs. Kowalska, Ukraine)

life without addressing the "macro-humanitarian" problems. In that regard, it was to be regretted that financial constraints had caused a postponement of the high-level interregional consultation on the role of women in public life, which should have taken place in September 1991.

62. Attention should also be drawn to the continuing difficulties faced by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its tireless efforts to implement the Convention and to elaborate appropriate recommendations. In particular, the dialogue between the Secretariat and the Committee should be accompanied by a strengthening of the support given to the Committee.

63. While noting the efforts made to increase the number of women occupying posts in the United Nations Secretariat, her delegation still thought it necessary to take energetic measures to attain the level of recruitment already established, particularly at higher levels. If the Organization did not serve as a model in that respect, by ensuring equal rights for the larger part of humanity, how could one speak of the inception of a just world order as the third millennium approached and of the pre-eminent role that the Organization should assume?

64. Her delegation welcomed the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women, which continued to improve its working methods and provide consultative services for competent national institutions, including in the countries of central and eastern Europe. The regional seminar on the impact of political and economic reform on the status of women in those countries, held in April, represented an example of cooperation which should be imitated.

65. The Commission on the Status of Women had, on many occasions, asked the Economic Commission for Europe to do more to promote women's rights. Europe was the only region which did not have a regional programme on women's rights. She thus welcomed the fact that the delegation of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic had announced that it was negotiating with the secretariat of ECE concerning the organization, at Prague in 1994, of a European conference on women in preparation for the World Conference. The attainment of the objectives of the Forward-looking Strategies during the current decade would largely depend on national, regional and international initiatives and on increasing their effectiveness.

66. Mrs. KODIKARA (Philippines) said that it was for the Governments of Member States to build on the encouraging foundations provided by the reports of the Secretary-General on the advancement of women. Her delegation looked forward to the 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, which would enable the world community to relate the results emerging from the Survey to human rights, including the right to development. She trusted that the Survey would suggest ways in which the world community could enlarge the share of global income going to developing countries. Only by increasing national income would a larger share go to women.

(Mrs. Kodikara, Philippines)

67. It was gratifying to note that the Secretariat was involved in the question of the environment and development. The Global Assembly on Women in and Environment - Partners in Life, to be held at Miami in November 1991, would provide an opportunity to develop educational programmes on environmental issues and their relationship to daily life. It was to be hoped that the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) would reach specific conclusions on the role of women in that domain, particularly in developing countries, which were tending to become dumping grounds for toxic wastes.

68. She trusted that all United Nations bodies would cooperate with non-governmental organizations on the question of women and population dynamics, which would be a priority theme in the next decade, particularly at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. The meeting organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women with the American Association of Retired Persons provided an example of such cooperation.

69. Her delegation welcomed the new and important publication, The World's Women, 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics, prepared by the United Nations Statistical Office in cooperation with UNFPA, UNIFEM and UNICEF. The publication would provide a good starting point for national surveys, reports and even plans relating not only to women, but other social issues too.

70. The publication also indicated that women's economic activity rates were very low (under 20 per cent) in south and west Asia but fairly high (35 to 40 per cent) in east and south-west Asia, and that the number of women in paid employment had risen considerably (from 44 to 57 per cent of the total, excluding south Asia). The increase seemed to be due to recent economic growth in Thailand, Japan, Indonesia and Singapore, but might also be partly due to recent legislation on the advancement of women and an awareness of the issues involved. It could also be due to improvements in the level of education and training of women.

71. Of the total number of women economically active in 1990, 57 per cent were in Asia. They were mainly employed in clerical, sales and domestic work, rather than managerial posts. Further, only 10 to 20 per cent of managerial and administrative jobs worldwide were held by women. In the United States one of the most industrialized countries, only 2 of the top 1,000 corporations were headed by women, a mere 0.2 per cent. The discrepancy would no doubt be still greater in developing countries.

72. The international conferences to be held in 1992, 1993 and 1994 should consider the items included in their agendas from a gender-oriented perspective, in order to provide inputs to the World Conference on Women in 1995.

73. Similarly, the United Nations committees and bodies dealing with the elimination of discrimination against women, human rights, the rights of the

(Mrs. Kodikara, Philippines)

child, minorities and refugees should break down their analyses by sex so as to provide inputs for the proposed summit on social issues.

74. Her delegation looked forward to the holding of the eleventh session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), at which CEDAW would consider article 6 of the Convention, dealing with exploitation of women, coercion, domestic violence and sexual harassment, issues which had recently attracted attention but which had been ignored or considered merely "private" or "sensitive".

75. Under the machinery for implementation of the Philippine development plan for women, which was supported by UNIFEM, the Philippine National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women had undertaken a project which was the first of its kind in the world. The project sought to establish focal points in all government agencies, with responsiblity for devising gender-responsive programmes. Experience gained with the project could be shared not only in Asia but also other regions. Her delegation thanked those countries that had contributed to UNIFEM, particularly the United States, which had recently contributed $1 million to the Fund.

76. To increase awareness of women's issues in Government and private sectors, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women had also held consultative workshops, with the aim of ensuring de facto equality, legal equality having already been established. In rural areas women already had the right to ownership of land and an equal share of farm produce and to representation on decision-making bodies. The practice of "mail-order brides" and other related advertising practices had been banned. A bill before the Philippine Congress would seek to remove the requirement for a wife to obtain her husband's signature in order to apply for an agricultural loan. Those measures supposed the existence of machinery for implementation, which would happen only if women were present at all levels, including the ministerial level, an issue which the National Commission monitored.

77. Under the Canadian International Development Agency programme, seminars on gender analysis in project development had been organized. In the Philippines, as in other countries, the convening of the World Conference on Women in 1995, whose main thrust would be action for equality, development and peace, was eagerly awaited.

The meeting rose at noon.